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A SHORT
NARRATIVE

OF THE
Sufferings of the Missionaries

IN THE
ISLAND OF TONGATABOO,
IN THE SOUTH SEA.

IN A LETTER FROM ONE OF THEM
who returned to England in his Majesty's Ship Reliance,
To a Gentleman in this Town.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,
Description of the Island of Tongataboo,
From Captain Cook's Voyages.

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE:
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A SHORT
NARRATIVE, &c.

DEAR SIR,

LONDON, Sept. 11, 1800.

THOUGH I might find many excuses to postpone writing at present; but a favourable opportunity occurring, and being compelled by a sense of my weighty obligations to you, I could not but trouble you with a few lines.---I doubt not but you will be much surprized, and perhaps grieved, (as many others are) at my return, especially when you hear that our expedition has not been attended with the smallest degree of success, so far as we know. I believe none feels the disappointment more sensibly than I and my companions. It sometimes fills me with such shame and grief, as is like to overwhelm me altogether; and

and I much fear it will discourage the hearts and cause the hands of many of the Lord's people to hang down, while it will encourage his enemies, and fill their mouths with bitter reproaches against him and his truth. I am not, however, amidst all my discouragements, entirely destitute of a hope, that our labours will yet, some way or other, (though I cannot tell how) prove conducive to the hastening of those happy days, when the isles shall wait for the Redeemer's law, and trust upon his saving arm.

Since you last heard from me, I have had both mercy and judgment to sing of as I expect will be the case while in this changing world. After the departure of the Duff, notwithstanding the machinations of our enemies, we continued in tolerable comfortable circumstances till April 1799, when the chief, on whom we mostly depended, was inhumanly murdered while asleep; a civil war immedi-

ately

ately ensued, in which almost every friend we had was cut off. On the 10th of May following, three of our brethren were slain, their habitations plundered and burnt; and next day those of us who survived, were, by the ferocious natives, stripped almost of every thing they could deprive us of, and left nearly as naked as we came into the world. What a mercy in such circumstances to have a treasure beyond their reach, which would enrich us to eternity! for, for a fortnight afterwards, our lives seemed in jeopardy every hour; and since, during a stay of about nine months that we were longer among them, I may truly say we were in deaths

The hand of providence seemed to me remarkably evident, in opening a door for our escape, when things appeared at the last extremity with us; for when we had repeated assurances both from friends and enemies, that our death was really deter-

determined on by the reigning chief, (who had been the murderer of our friend) and was intended to be effected in a fortnight, a ship named the Betsey of London came to the island on January 22d, 1800, with brother Harris of Otaheite on board, who had been stimulated merely by a desire of seeing us, to quit Otaheite for a time, and undertake a voyage to Port Jackson, whither she was bound. The captain received us in the most friendly manner and generously offered us a passage thither in his cabin free of all expence which we all accepted, except one who had separated from us immediately after the departure of the Duff. On our passage, which lasted sixteen days, our worthy captain proved the sincerity of his friendship, by treating us in the kindest manner imaginable, and at my departure by an offer of five pounds to procure refreshments on my way home, which I did not accept, not knowing if it might ever be in my power to make a suitable return.

On our arrival at Port Jackson, we found
 brother Cover ready to embark for Eu-
 rope in his Majesty's ship Reliance, and
 upon application to governor Hunter, he
 readily appointed us a passage on board
 her, at the same time supplying us with
 competency of cloathing, and a protec-
 tion to prevent our molestation when we
 arrived in England. We set sail from
 Port Jackson on the 3d of March, and
 came home by the way of Cape Horn.
 Our passage (though fine) was on many
 accounts very uncomfortable, chiefly be-
 cause of our company, which was the
 worst I ever met with; however through
 mercy we arrived safe at Spithead on
 Monday the 1st of Sept. from whence
 we proceeded to London on Friday the
 14th, where we had an interview with our
 directors on Monday evening; they in
 general received us kindly, and seem to
 approve of our conduct. At present I am
 quite at a loss what to do; I do not think
 my obligations to God or to the society
 in

in the least dissolved, nor I hope my desire of promoting his cause in the world much abated ; but there appears such obstacles to it in the South Sea Islands as seems, to me at least, insurmountable at this time, and which, if I mistake not bespeak it not to be the time which the Lord hath set to favour them.



DESCRIPTION of the ISLAND of TONGATABOO.

From Captain Cook's Voyages.

TONGATABOO, or Tonga, (as the natives sometimes call it) is about twenty leagues in circumference, rather oblong, tho' broadest at the east end, and its greatest length from east to west. The south shore is straight, consisting of coral rocks of about eight or ten feet high, terminating perpendicularly, except in some few places, where there are sandy beaches. The west end is about five or six miles broad, and has a shore like that of the south side; but the north side is environed with shoals and islands; and the east side is, most probably, like the south.

This island may, with propriety, be called a low one; the only eminent part, to be observed from a ship, is the S. E. point, though many gently rising and declining grounds are perceivable by those who are on shore. Tho' the general appearance of the country does not exhibit that beautiful kind of landscape, produced by a variety of hills and vallies, rivulets and lawns, yet it conveys an idea of the most exuberant fertility. The surface, at a distance, seems entirely clothed with trees of various sizes: but the tall cocoa palms raise their tufted heads high above the rest, and are a noble ornament to any country that produces them. The boogo, which is a species of the tree is the largest sized tree upon the island; and the most common bushes and small trees,

on

on the uncultivated spots, are the pandanus, the faitanoo, several sorts of hibiscus, and a few others.

The climate of Tongataboo, from the situation towards the tropic, is more variable than in countries far within that line; though that might, perhaps, be occasioned by the season of the year, which was now the winter solstice. The winds are generally from some point between S. and E. The wind, indeed, sometimes veers to the N. E. or even N. W. but never continues long, nor blows strong from thence, though often accompanied by heavy rain, and close sultry weather.

The vegetable productions are never so much affected, respecting the foliage, as to shed it all at once; but every leaf, as it falls is succeeded by another, which causes the appearance of universal spring.

A coral rock appears to be the basis of the island, that being the only sort that presents itself on the shore. There was not the appearance of any other stone except some small blue pebbles about the fiatookas, and the smooth black stone, of which the natives make their hatchets; and these have perhaps been brought from other islands in the neighbourhood. Though in many places the coral projects above the surface, the soil is in most parts of a considerable depth. In cultivated places it is generally of a loose black colour, seemingly produced by the rotten vegetables.

The principal of the cultivated fruits in the island, are plantains, of which they have

een varieties; the jambu and the eeevee; the latter being a kind of plumb; and vast quantities of shaddocks, as often found in a natural state as planted.

Of yams there are two sorts; one black, and so large as to weigh from twenty to thirty pounds; the other white and long, seldom exceeding a pound in weight. There is a large root called kappe; another like our white potatoes, called mawhaha; the talo, and the jee.

They have vast numbers of cocoa nut trees, and three other sorts of palms. One is called ceoo, growing almost as high as the cocoa tree, and having very large leaves, plaited like a fan. The other is a kind of cabbage tree, much resembling the cocoa, but rather thicker. The third sort is called ongo ongo; it seldom grows higher than five or six feet. Plenty of excellent sugar-cane is cultivated here; also gourds, bamboo, turmeric, and a species of yam, called matte; but the catalogue of uncultivated plants is too large to be enumerated.

There are no quadrupeds in this island, but pigs, dogs, and a few rats. Fowls of a large breed, are domesticated here.

Among the birds, are parrots, and parroquets; cockoos, king-fishers, and a bird of the thrush kind, of a dull green colour, which is the only singing bird we could find here; but it compensates in a great degree for the want of others, by the force and melody of its voice.

Among the other land birds are rails about the size of a pigeon, of a variegated grey colour

colour; a black sort with reddish eyes; large violet coats, with red bald crowns; two sorts of fly-catchers; a small swallow; and the sorts of pigeons.

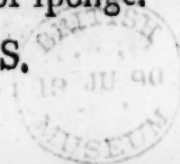
Of water fowl, are the ducks seen at Ammooka; tropic birds; blue and white herons; noddies; white terns; a new species of leaden colour; a small bluish curlew; and a large spotted plover.

Among the animals of the reptile or invertebrate tribe, are sea snakes, (though often seen on shore) about three feet long, with alternate black and white circles; some scorpions, and centipedes: also green guanoes, about eight inches long, and two smaller sorts. Here are some beautiful moths and butterflies, and some very large spiders; together with others, making in the whole about fifty different sorts of insects.

Though the sea abounds with fish, the variety is less than might be imagined: those in the greatest plenty are mullets; silver fish, codwives, parrot fish, soles, leather jackets, albacores, bonnettos, eels like those about Palmston's Island, rays, a sort of pike, and some evil fish.

There are an endless variety of shell fish about the reefs and shoals; among which are the hammer oyster; a large indentated oyster and many others; but none of the common sort; a gigantic cockle, panamas; conch shells, pearl-shell oysters, &c. Also several sorts of sea-eggs; many curious star-fish; crabs; crayfish, &c. and several sorts of sponge.

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